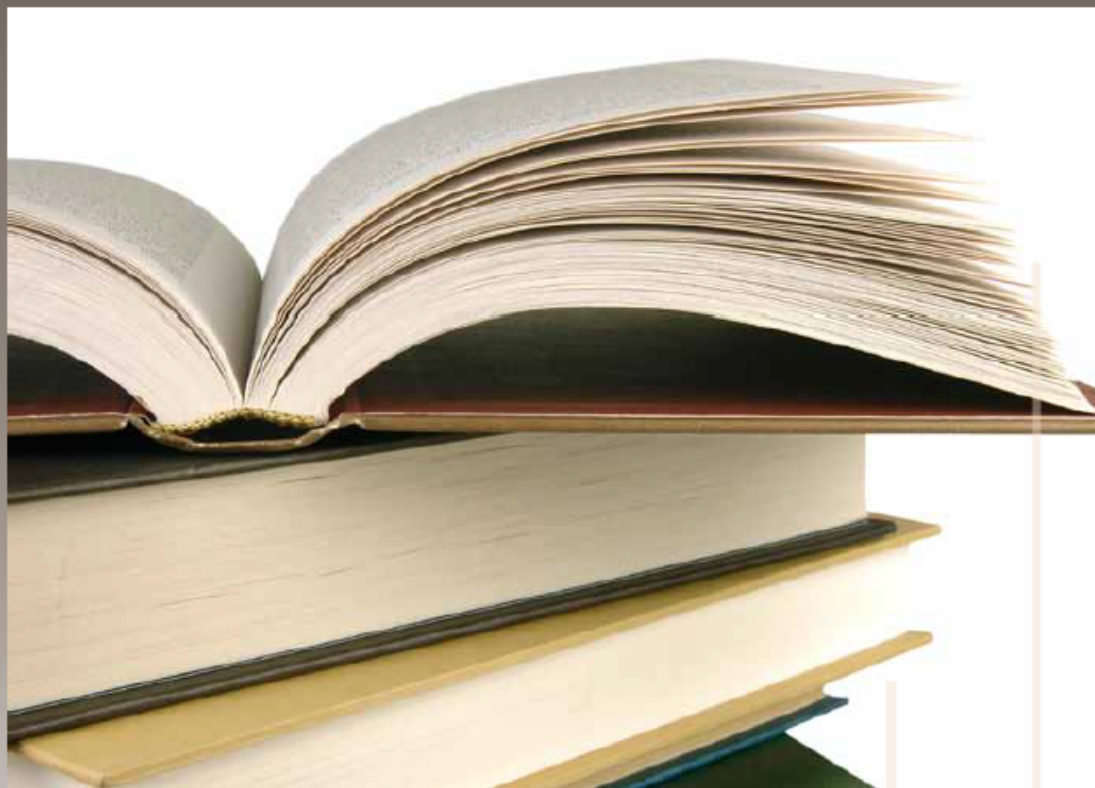


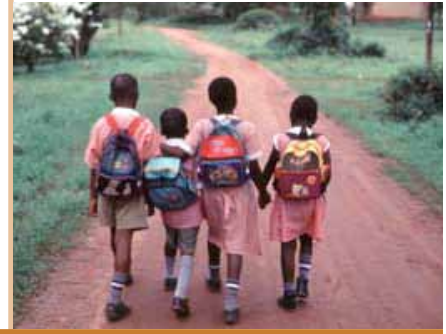
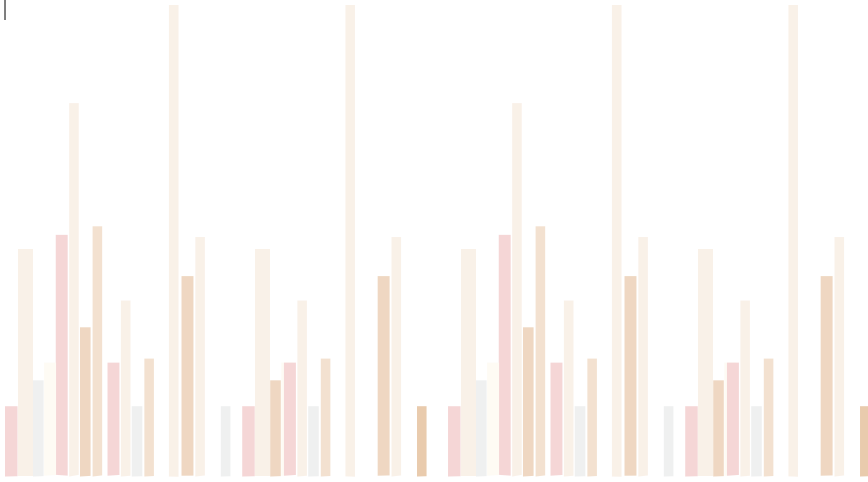


## **Investing in our Nation's Children:**

Reforming Uganda's Education System for Equity,  
Quality, Excellence and National Development



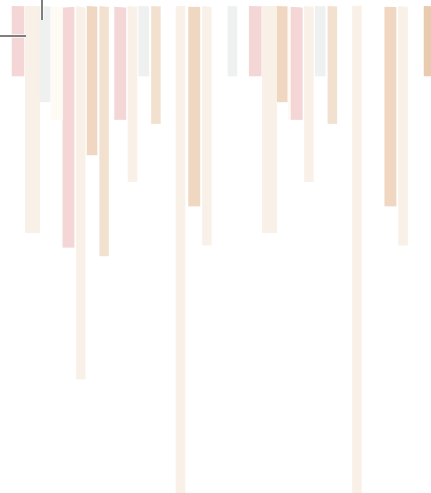
**Godber Tumushabe  
Jacklyn Makaaru Arinaitwe**



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## CONTENTS





<b>List of Acronyms</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Delivering Education Reform: The Unfinished Business</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1 Access to education	4
2.2 Equity in Education	5
2.3 The Quality of Education	6
<b>3. Recommendations: What needs to Change?</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Strengthen political and policy leadership for education	8
3.2 Develop indicators to monitor and correct leadership and governance failures in the education service delivery system	9
3.3 Give poor parents “choice” over their children’s school	9
3.4 Reforming the education funding architecture	11
3.5 Create incentives that reward best performers in education services delivery	13
3.6 Establish centers of excellence	14
3.7 Increase capacity of institutions to manage, coordinate and sustain reform	15
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Publications in this Series</b>	<b>20</b>



## List of Acronyms

<b>ACODE</b>	Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment
<b>BTVET</b>	Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information Systems
<b>EPRC</b>	Education Policy Review Commission
<b>GWPE</b>	Government White Paper on Education
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Sports
<b>NCDC</b>	National Curriculum Development Center
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NRM</b>	National Resistance Movement
<b>ODA</b>	Overseas Development Assistance
<b>UNEB</b>	Uganda National Examinations Board
<b>UPE</b>	Universal Primary Education
<b>USE</b>	Universal Secondary Education



## Acknowledgements

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The authors are indebted to the authors of the papers presented at the High Level Policy Dialogue for their dedication in studying the reform attempts in all the education sub-sectors: primary, secondary, BTVET, and higher education.

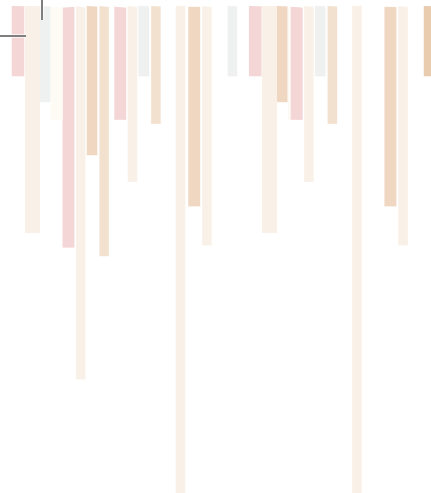
The participants at the High Level Policy Dialogue are acknowledged for their insightful contributions to the general discussion on policy reform in the education sector. This greatly enriched the content of this briefing paper.

We are grateful to Dr. Pamela K. Mbabazi and Mr. George Bogere for their intellectual input and for reviewing the first draft of this briefing paper. We also thank Emmanuel Keith Kisaame for providing research assistance.

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We acknowledge the financial support from Trust Africa to the Uganda Vice Chancellors' Forum which made it possible for ACODE to engage a wide stakeholder audience at the High Level Policy Dialogue. We also acknowledge the support and partnership of the Uganda Vice Chancellors' Forum, which provided the platform to engage in this process. This briefing paper draws from ACODE's work on public expenditure governance undertaken under the Citizens' Budget Tracking and Information Centre (CBTC). The support to the Centre by the Dutch Government and the Hewlett Foundation is acknowledged.

The views expressed here are strictly those of the authors and do not in any way represent those of ACODE or the funding partners. The authors take sole responsibility for any errors and omissions.



*“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.” –*

**Nelson Mandela**

# 1. Introduction

Uganda's education system has undergone a series of reforms since independence. These reforms encompass numerous attempts and interventions to ensure that the system is robust and meets the challenges of a rapidly changing labor market and a continually globalizing world. In recent years, the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) creating opportunity for millions of children to enroll in school epitomizes the positive outcomes of these reforms. However, the promise of equity and equality in education remains elusive.

The main objective of this policy brief is to bring to the attention of Ugandan policy makers, the executive and parliament, the requisite changes needed to transform our country's education system into a more equitable and high quality education system. The briefing paper is based on a more comprehensive study on the political economy of Uganda's education policy reforms and background papers presented at the High Level Policy Dialogue on Education Policy Reforms in Uganda.<sup>1</sup> The dialogue mainly focused on the state of Uganda's education system and, the political economy of Uganda's education policy reforms. Based on this work, the briefing paper proposes actions required to correct the deficiencies and failures of past reform attempts. The nature of recommendations advanced in this brief are considerations for a sector-wide reform and not piece-meal reform for each individual sub-sectors.

<sup>1</sup> See Report of the High Level Policy Dialogue on Education Policy Reforms in Uganda. UVCF/ACODE/Trust Africa. Kampala, 2012



## 2. Delivering Education Reform: The Unfinished Business

There is general consensus that the problem with Uganda's public education system is systemic and cannot be addressed with only knee-jerk interventions.<sup>2</sup> With the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE), the quality of graduates has continually deteriorated. They are increasingly out of touch with the job market. Yet, demand for education in Uganda has never been greater with the population rapidly growing at 3.2% per annum and with approximately half of the population under the age of 18<sup>3</sup>. For the education sector, a young population implies that the government must invest significantly in the provision of education as a public good. Investment in education takes different forms including financial, infrastructural, managerial, good governance, outcome tracking and measurement, and system-wide integrity.

The importance of education as a public good and the role of education in human, economic, and capital development behave

The Education Sector is not just any public sector, it is an investment sector; a sector dealing with human capital. When the right investments are made, the benefits for the individual and the country as a whole would be great.

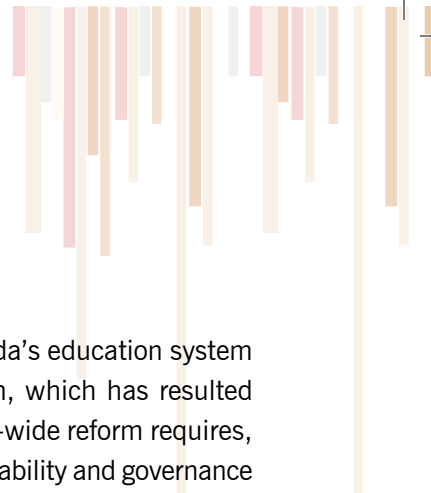
government to perform the moral and economic responsibility to provide quality and equitable education. The Education Sector is not just any public sector, it is an investment sector—a sector dealing with human capital. When the right investments are made, the benefits for the individual and the country as a whole would be great.<sup>4</sup>

Over the last 30 years, the government of Uganda has made several attempts at reforming the education system focusing on equal access, equity, and the quality of education. The system has however been encumbered by systemic failures. These failures cannot be addressed by just fixing some parts of the system but rather by a comprehensive effort to overhaul the current system.

<sup>2</sup> The recommendations of the 1989 Report of the Education Policy Review Commission hold a similar approach.

<sup>3</sup> 2012 Statistical Abstract, UBOS

<sup>4</sup> Wheeler, D., (1980). "Human Resource Development and Economic Growth in Developing Countries: A simultaneous model." Washington, DC: World Bank, Staff Working Paper No. 407.



Yet, the nature and implementation of reforms in Uganda's education system has failed to address the need for a systemic redesign, which has resulted into ad hoc fixes that leave a lot to be desired. A system-wide reform requires, among others, significant changes in the existing accountability and governance mechanisms both for school and government administrators and student achievement measurements.

One of the aims of education in Uganda as stipulated in the Government White Paper on Education of 1992 is "to eradicate illiteracy and equip the individual with basic skills and knowledge to exploit the environment for self-development as well as national development, for better health, nutrition, and family life, and the capability for continued learning."<sup>5</sup> As a low income country aiming at a middle income status, Uganda's education would serve the country and citizens well, if the system produced high quality and competitive graduates in a world that is continually globalizing. To do this, the government must invest in system-wide reforms that are proactive, outcome-oriented and have the effect of combating the culture of failure and inequity.

The government's strategies to achieve the aims of education are contained in several policy documents including the Uganda Vision 2040, the National Development Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15, the Revised Education Sector Strategic Plan (2007 – 2015), the Education Act of 2008, the Government White Paper on Education (GWPE) of 1992, and the annual Ministerial Policy Statements of the Ministry of Education and Sports. In particular, the GWPE has been the basis for all education policy in Uganda since 1992, following recommendations of the Education Policy Review Commission Report of 1989. At best, these strategies and reform attempts can be explained as layered piecemeal efforts that attempted to address systemic failures without thorough conceptualization, prioritization, piloting, and time bound implementation plans.

Many of the post-independence crises in the education system are well articulated in the EPRC report of 1989, and continue to hamper progress. High dropout rates, low completion and graduation rates, understaffing, teacher absenteeism, lack of scholastic materials, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and achievement gaps along geographical location, all contribute to poor educational outcomes at all levels. The attempts at reform over the

past 30 years have aimed at improving access, equity, and the quality of education in Uganda. These three issues are addressed here.

## 2.1 ACCESS TO EDUCATION

At the heart of unequal access to education in Uganda is the challenge of poverty based on the general poor-non poor distribution as well the rural-urban poverty divide. Table 1 below shows the current statistics on poverty and literacy along the rural-urban divide.

**Table 1: Poverty and Literacy Distribution**

	Rural	Urban
<b>Poverty</b> (national = 24.5)	27.2	9.2
<b>Literacy</b> (national = 73)	69 (M = 77; F = 62)	88(M = 90; F = 86)

*Source: 2012 Statistical Abstract, UBOS*

The rural-urban poverty divide in Uganda continues to challenge development policy and practice, including education. Currently, 15 percent of Uganda’s population lives in urban areas and 85 percent live in rural areas. The concentration of poverty in rural areas implores government to devise redistributive policies especially in education, and equal access is one such policy. There is also concentration of illiteracy in the rural areas with females more illiterate than males. With the introduction of UPE in 1997 and USE in 2007, the intent of the government of Uganda was to ensure increased access to education especially for the poor and those in rural areas, many of whom primary education is the highest level of formal education they will get<sup>6</sup>.

Indeed, with Uganda’s “bang” approach to universal education, the World Bank lauded Uganda for doubling enrollment rates from 3.4 million to 6.9 million pupils, with a concomitant political commitment to ensure transparency and accountability in the system<sup>7</sup>. Figure 1

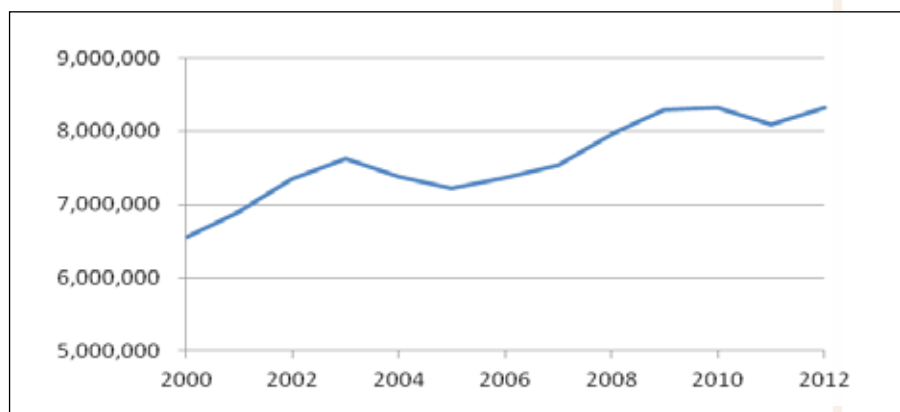
Overcrowded classrooms, low morale among the teachers, puny salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff, infrastructural deficiencies, and a collapse of governance at the school, district, and national level have all contributed to systemic failure.

<sup>6</sup> See Stasavage, 2005

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, 2002

shows enrollment in primary schools by numbers since 2000. Although enrollment rates seem to have increased over the twelve year period, the Education statistics show that during the same period dropout, rates have averaged five percent.

**Figure 1: Enrollment By Numbers in Primary Education (2000 – 2012)**



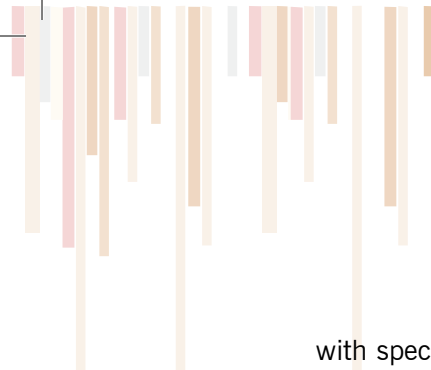
Source: EMIS

What may not have been clear at the time was that the adoption of free primary education was more political than rational as it was announced at the pick of presidential campaigns in 1996. No empirical work was undertaken to guide the implementation of the UPE programmes expressed as a political pronouncement.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, the well intentioned universal education has resulted into a decline in the quality of education and its general delivery as a service. Overcrowded classrooms, low morale among the teachers, puny salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff, infrastructural deficiencies, and a collapse of governance at the school, district, and national level have all become part of this systemic failure.

## 2.2 EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Historically, the issue of equity has hinged on providing education to students with special needs, the girl child, orphans, and targeting schools in needy and “hard to reach areas”. Although laudable to an extent, the affirmative action strategies government has put in place to ensure equity in education such as the district quota system and targeted bursaries for girls and students

<sup>8</sup> Avenstrup et al., 2004



with special needs have immense policy distorting effects. For example the guidelines for district quota systems are vague and lack transparency. This makes it difficult to understand what qualifies a student for a district quota scholarship; would it be district of decency, residence, or school attendance?<sup>9</sup> There is need for clear and systematic policy implementation strategies and guidelines.

### 2.3 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

To improve the quality of education in Uganda, the government proposes strategies that improve in-classroom indicators such as: decongesting classrooms, enhancing instructional quality, strengthening the teaching force, and review of curriculum, to mention a few. All these strategies would inevitably require enormous financial commitment. These finances would be used to train teachers and reduce pupil-teacher ratios and, equip students and instructors with scholastic materials including textbooks and library resources. A 2011 UWEZO report<sup>10</sup> shows that the national average on pupil-teacher ratios stands at 58.9, which is considered to be on the higher side. In some districts, for example, Amuru, pupil-teacher ratios are as high as 75:1 and pupil-classroom average 112:1<sup>11</sup>. The Uwezo report also shows weekly pupil absenteeism averaging 23.9 percent; while only 30 percent of the schools in the sample report to have library facilities; and 11 percent of pupils go without mid-day meals. All these factors undoubtedly have a significant impact on the quality of a child's education and need to be addressed if the quality of education is to be improved.

9 The district quarter system of sponsorship for admission to public universities is also often advanced as one of the key reasons for demanding for districts which invariably lead to distortions in overall public administration arrangements and public expenditure.

10 Uwezo Assessment Learning Report, 2011

11 Otile, Owor, & Akena (2013). Amuru District Council Score-Card Report 2011/12

### 3. Recommendations: What needs to Change?

Building a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century education system will require a coherent strategy that builds the individual’s knowledge base, critical thinking abilities, and leadership. Most importantly, the 21<sup>st</sup> century

Building a successful education system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require a coherent strategy that builds the individual’s knowledge base, critical thinking abilities, and leadership.

global knowledge economy will require effective political and policy leadership. Ultimately, both the strategy and leadership must focus on delivering what Barber<sup>12</sup> describes as the four factors of

what it might mean to be considered well educated: ethical underpinning, knowledge, thinking and leadership.

He also advances a synthesis of building blocks that are critical for successful education systems for the future, hinged on standards, accountability, human capital, structure and organization as shown below. According to Barber, success requires a system-wide approach to reform with a coherent design and effective reform execution.

#### The Building Blocks of World Class Education

Standards and Accountability	Human Capital	Structure and Organization
Globally benchmarked standards	Recruit great people and train them well	Effective enabling central department and agencies
Good transparent data	Continuous improvement of pedagogical skills and knowledge	Capacity to manage, change and engage
Every child on the agenda always in order to challenge inequality	Great leadership at school level	Operational responsibility and budgets significantly devolved to school level

*Source: Report on the International Education Roundtable, Singapore, 2009*

<sup>12</sup> Barber & Mourshed (2009), Report on the International Education Roundtable, Singapore


If Uganda has not developed an education system that delivers equity and quality to its learning population, it has never been due to lack of trying. As shown in the preceding sections, numerous attempts at reform have been made over the last half a century although the results remain minimal. Evidence suggests that there has not been a shortage of political will for education reform<sup>13</sup>. It is argued here that the failure to deliver quality education in Uganda is more due to the absence of political and policy leadership than the absence or lack of political will.

Political will is defined here as the political articulation or general expressions of political support for particular policy positions. Politicians at all levels make wide ranging promises to the electorate and citizens on their intentions to take action to improve the quality of public service delivery. For example, almost a decade after the Report of the Education Policy Review Commission, the introduction of Universal Primary Education was first announced as a campaign promise by President Museveni during the 1996 elections. That was a clear expression of political will to take action. Similar declaratory statements have been made with regard to vocationalization as a political commitment to transform Uganda's labour force through a skills development program.<sup>14</sup> Political will can therefore be discerned from the speeches of political leaders, the campaign manifestos of political parties or the policy narratives to be found in national policy and strategy documents.

As opposed to political will, political and policy leadership connotes three important things: First, political leaders and policy makers appreciate and are able to articulate the “big policy and programmatic ideas” that are likely to have a transformative effect on the social, economic and political landscape of the country or the target community across time and scale. Second, the leaders have the capability and skill to mobilize the entire population around the proposed agenda. Third, the leaders have the capacity to ensure systematic implementation of the proposed ideas and accountability for failure. They are able to deploy public resources in a strategic manner and put together a package of incentives and disincentives to stimulate action and reduce opposition to the agenda. The appropriate concentration of political and policy

<sup>13</sup> See Worldbank, 2010; and Stasavage 2005b

<sup>14</sup> See “Ministry of Education and Sports (2011). Skilling Uganda: BTNET Strategic Plan 2011-2020”



leadership at the national, local government and service delivery unit level is what is required to shift Uganda’s education system from the routine to a transformative phase.

3.2

### **DEVELOP INDICATORS TO MONITOR AND CORRECT LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE FAILURES IN THE EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM**

In order to build on the progress that has been made over the last half a century of education sector reforms, it is important to develop and adopt indicators that enable the country to detect and correct any leadership and governance failures in the Nation’s education system. For example, at the ministerial level, what are the gaps that explain why corrective political actions cannot be taken to address the glaring problem of low academic achievement and poor completion rates? Or in the case of funding, what mechanisms exist to hold those who are charged with managing funding for education to account when there are failures on the delivery of public funds to the beneficiary education services delivery units? Similar questions may be asked about schools that have deplorable physical infrastructure or consistent underperformance.

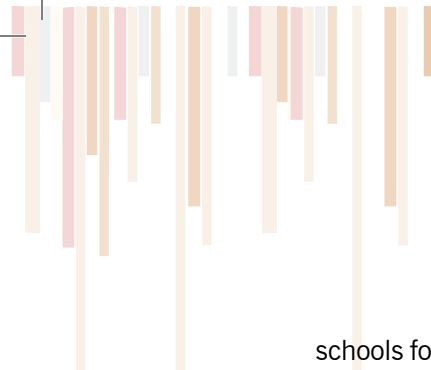
Mainly because there are no systematic criteria for monitoring and detecting governance and leadership failures in the delivery of education services, some of these failures are accepted as routine and consequently become embedded as part of the system that is incapable of reforming itself. Very little analytical work has been undertaken in this area and yet policy makers and political leaders require evidence to be able to take appropriate action. It is therefore important that appropriate investments be made to undertake empirical research and analytical work that can provide a basis for the development of criteria and indicators for detecting and correcting leadership and governance failures in the education services delivery system.

3.3

### **GIVE POOR PARENTS “CHOICE” OVER THEIR CHILDREN’S SCHOOL**

The concept of “school choice” has generated much debate in education circles especially in developed countries, notably in the United States. School choice is a range of programs – including school fees vouchers and charter schools – that give parents liberty to choose where their children will go to school without geographical or economic encumbrances. Proponents of school choice argue that choice improves school quality and efficiency through competition among





schools for top performing students; enhances opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be trapped in bad schools; and spurs innovation through greater administrative autonomy in choice schools<sup>15</sup>.

In Uganda, well off parents have a choice because the only limitation to school choice is economical. For the poor, their only choice is the poor schools in their neighbourhood. Yet, many bright children who attend the poor schools because of financial limitations get lost in the system. Currently statistics show that, per pupil expenditures in primary schools stand at approximately Uganda shillings 4,657 annually and each government aided school receives a threshold of Uganda shillings 100,000 per month for a total of nine months equivalent to the school year<sup>16,17</sup>. This pittance arguably shows how much government is committed to education: not only is it sad, but it is embarrassing. Equity and school choice would mean pupils from low-income families and the disabled would get assistance vouchers from government to attend either private schools or government aided schools with higher standards so that poor yet gifted pupils are not left behind because of system inequities.

“The purpose of school choice must be to give every child an opportunity to get a decent education”<sup>18</sup>. Specifically, to avail school choice to parents, government can pursue the following strategies<sup>19</sup>:

- Expand options for learning that connect well performing schools to rural or poor schools through use of technology in classrooms such as use of virtual education programs, through which students from poor areas benefit from their peers in good schools<sup>20</sup>.
- All good performing public schools should be required to open their admissions to voucher students. For those schools which are oversubscribed, admission could be done by lottery to avoid a systems capture where influential parents have an unfair advantage.

15 Green et al. (2010). Expanding Choice in Elementary and Secondary Education

16 See USAID report on UPE Capitation Grant Tracking Study, 2006; Also see communication from the Permanent Secretary of MOES on the Release of UPE Capitation Grants During FY 2009/10 available at <http://www.education.go.ug/news/27-upe-capitation-grants-for-20092010.html> accessed on January 23, 2013.

17 The guidelines on policy, roles, and responsibilities of stakeholders in the implementation of UPE (1998) set capitation grants per child per month at Uganda Shillings 555.50 and 900 for pupils in P1-P3 and P4-P7 respectively.

18 Viteritti, (1999) page 38

19 For more on other strategies to expand choice in public schools, see Green et al. (2010)

20 Studies on peer effects in education have been documented by several scholars to show that there are positive benefits that accrue to low achieving students by attending school with high achieving students. See for example Ding and Leher (2007); Henderson, Mieszkowski, & Sauvageau (1978)

- Parental preferences for choice as revealed through the popularity of schools or districts should be reflected in funding formulas such that the preferred choice schools are allocated more resources to meet enrollment demand.
- Schools that continuously perform poorly or are undersubscribed should be restructured or closed to increase competition between the well performing schools for both students and resources.

### 3.4 REFORMING THE EDUCATION FUNDING ARCHITECTURE

There are fundamental issues that need to be resolved with regard to the financing of education at all levels. A new financing architecture that gives more authority to local governments in determining funding priorities, ensures performance based allocation of funding, and creates an environment for competition among local governments is necessary to change the current education landscape.

The education sector budget has averaged about 18% of the national budget for the past five financial years, only second to security as the highest funded sector in the budget.<sup>21</sup> Available local government expenditure data shows that on average, every local government in Uganda spends approximately 50 percent of its budget on education.<sup>22</sup> Total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to education in Uganda for the financial year 2010 amounted to \$188 million<sup>23</sup> (equivalent to approximately Uganda Shillings 489 billion or 45 percent of the education budget). The intra-sectoral public expenditure allocations in the education sector is shown in table 2.

21 The budget outturn for education in 2010/11 is Uganda Shillings 1,093.66 billion (See Ministry of Finance, Budget Performance Reports, 2012).

22 See Tumushabe, Godber, et al (2012). Uganda Local Government Councils Score Card Report 2011/12: Strengthening the Local Government System to Improve Public Service Delivery, Accountability and Governance. ACODE Policy Research Series No. 53, 2012. ACODE. Kampala.

23 Source: OECD-DAC CRS database (2012).

**Table 2: Intra-Sector Public Expenditures (Actual Outturn, billion shillings)**

Unit	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Pre-Primary and Primary Education	25.8	25.02	30.45	32.6
Secondary	59.26	71.27	109.53	118.58
Special Needs Education, Guidance & Counseling	-	0.7	0.91	1.55
Higher Education	6.33	3.683	14.07	8.04
Skills Development	23.35	24.34	28.25	36.43
Quality and Standards	12.53	17.6	17.27	20.1
Physical Education and Sports	0.96	1.78	2.09	2.62
Policy, Planning and Support Services	0	9.86	13.3	7.79
Universities	79.34	86.36	99.85	119.04
Local governments	572.06	529.99	586.58	746.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>779.63</b>	<b>770.603</b>	<b>902.3</b>	<b>1093.66</b>

*Source: Budget Performance Reports, Ministry of Finance, 2012*

While it is not disputable that the education sector may require a lot more funding because of its short and long-term strategic importance, the current quality of service delivery is not reflective of the levels of public investments in the sector. There are fundamental governance challenges that undermine accountability and responsibility for failure of the system to ensure optimum returns on public investment. While education services covering nursery, primary, secondary, trade, special education, and technical education have been decentralized, concomitant decentralization of expenditure on these services has not fully happened. Government therefore needs to take bold actions and change the current financing architecture by transferring public expenditure responsibilities for education services to the local government in order to bridge the gap between the responsible entity and the citizens as consumers of education services.

Unfortunately, the teaching profession in Uganda has been greatly undermined and this partly explains why education outcomes are falling as well.

If the role of education is to imbue knowledge, then teachers are the dispensers and fountains of knowledge. No amount of technological advance will replace the role of the teacher. Unfortunately, the teaching profession in Uganda has been greatly undermined and this partly explains why education outcomes are falling as well. The government must revive the vocation to distribute talent and make the teaching vocation competitive, reputable, and rewarding. The poor welfare of teachers in terms of remuneration, living and working conditions, and how ill-equipped they are with scholastic materials generally lowers the morale of teachers.

A wide range of market-based incentives that can be considered to achieve this policy objective include the following:

- Market-based incentives for rewarding teachers which ensure that the cost and sacrifice teachers incur serving in varied environments is not greater than the benefit. For example, the current policy on service in hard to reach areas must be determined by market forces and not arbitrarily.
- Rewarding good performance with performance based pay and raising standards for teachers at all levels. Performance based pay can be based on student outcomes and leadership quality of the teachers. This requires development of indicators to track performance for both students and teachers, including measuring the extent to which teachers motivate students to learn.
- Restructuring staffing and deployment decisions by selectively identifying and retaining top talent<sup>24</sup>. Identifying top talent involves widening the pool from which to draw teachers to other professions to interest people of diverse skills and experiences.
- Developing leadership skills for teachers and other instructional staff (e.g. lab assistants, librarians, teaching assistants) by setting learning expectations, supporting development of teaching plans, coaching for staff, and establishing avenues for collaboration among peers to share experiences and good teaching practices.

<sup>24</sup> Singapore which has one of the best education systems in the world recruits their teachers from the top-third classification of students and invests heavily in teacher development and retention.

There was a time when Makerere University was the paragon of higher education in Africa: what happened? There are universities in the world that have not lost their lure because they have sustained their image as centers of excellence: Yale, Harvard, Cambridge, and Stanford, to mention a few. What if reform models in Uganda especially in higher education would establish centers of excellence either along geographical lines or along fields of specialization and make them competitive and inviolable such that pupils and students in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa aspire to get into one of those centers? In other words, why doesn't government gear the sector reform towards creating our own Yales and Harvards? The benefit of such centers of excellence recognized world over would be enormous. First, as a nation, Uganda would attract human capital (expert trainers and students) by positioning our education system as the best in the region. Secondly, it would curb down on the brain drain that currently stifles human and economic development because the nation's best talent choose greener pastures elsewhere. Third, positioning those centers of excellence as hubs of innovation, research, and development would create ripple benefits that spill into other sectors of the economy, and put the nation on a fast track to development and transformation.

A similar strategy can be replicated at the primary, secondary and vocational level. Policy actions that create centers of excellence in vocational training, entrepreneurship, business and leadership increase the production of talent and employability of the labor force. This is even more urgent and relevant given the wide range of companies interested in investing in Africa.

The current situation where Uganda's higher institutions of learning are increasingly relying more and more on foreign aid for funding physical development, research and innovation is not only undesirable but also self-defeating. A new uncompromising approach that focuses on investing in building and strengthening education centers of excellence at all levels of our education system must become the basis for redefining our education policy and our renewed commitment to leadership in inspiring learning, producing talent and nurturing leaders on the continent. The selection criteria for these centers of excellence should be based on geographic representation and insulated against political gerrymandering that has come to define our policy actions.

Reform is likely to succeed when there is a clear institutional framework that establishes clear institutional mandates, responsibilities, and accountability relationships. The assessment of whether an institution has the capacity to manage and sustain reform can be based on four important factors: the quality of the human resource capital at its disposal; the volume and predictability of financial resources it commands; the degree of legitimacy it enjoys among its peers; and ability to operate within the obtaining political economy landscape. Besides, sector-wide reforms require a strong national institution that is not only able to offer leadership of the reform process but also ensure effective coordination and taking responsibility for the failure of the reforms.

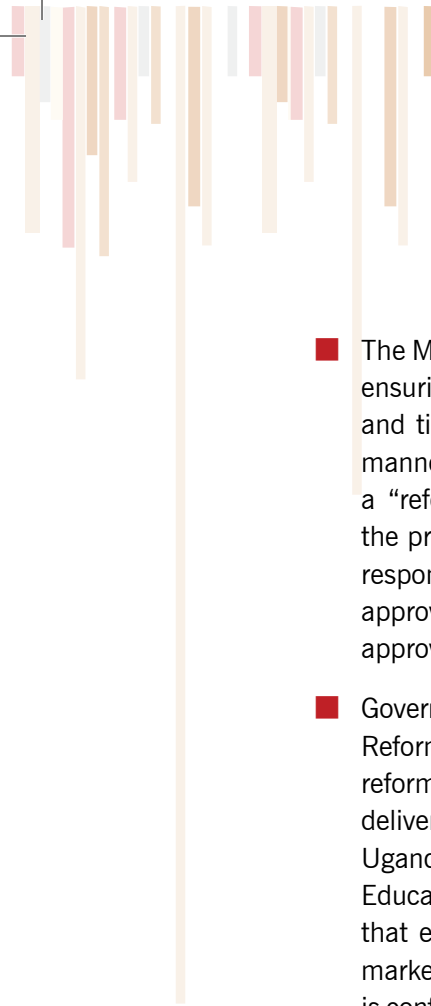
Given previous failed attempts to coordinate reforms in the education sector, it is important to undertake an empirical assessment of the capacity of the institutions in the sector to manage, coordinate and sustain the reforms. Outcomes from such an assessment would be the basis for strengthening these institutions. Such an assessment should answer key questions regarding

Sector-wide reforms require a strong national institution that is not only able to offer leadership of the reform process but also ensure effective coordination and taking responsibility for the failure of the reforms.

implementation of policy decisions in the sector. For example, how was it possible that UPE was introduced without bothering to establish how to deal with issues of quality? How come our curriculum does not keep pace with the skills requirement in the labor market and yet we have a national institution – the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) dedicated to curriculum reform. Who

ensures that what the NCDC does with the curriculum is consistent with the examinations model designed by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). And when these are not consistent, who is to be held accountable?

Given the current failures or the slow pace of reforms of Uganda's education system, Government should consider at least two important actions to strengthen capacity to manage, coordinate and sustain reform in the sector. These are:

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- The Ministry of Education and Sports should take overall responsibility for ensuring that the reform commitments and targets in the sector are clear and time bound, and they are communicated to the country in a clear manner. In this regard, the Ministry should on an annual basis publish a “reforms calendar” that shows what reforms are being undertaken, the progress that has been made during the year, the institution directly responsible and the time frames within which the reforms are to be approved by Cabinet or any other institution vested with the powers of approval.
  - Government should create a High Level Policy Forum on Education System Reform that brings together all the institutions that are vested with policy reform mandates to work together in a vertical and horizontal manner to deliver the reforms that can structurally and on a long-term basis transform Uganda’s education system. Vertically, the High Level Policy Forum on Education System Reform should ensure that there are continuous reforms that enable the education system respond to the changes in the labor market. Horizontally, the Forum should ensure that the education system is configured to produce relevant human capital at any level. Such a Forum should be able to take decisions that are binding on all institutions that come together to direct the reform process.

## 4. Conclusion

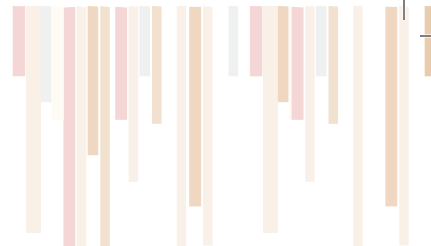
The Government of Uganda has made numerous attempts at reforming the education system to make it relevant to national needs and responsive to the changes in the labor market. However, the momentum of reform triggered by the publication of the Report of the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) in 1989 and the Government White Paper in 1992 were not sustained as should have been the case. Since then, the recommendations from that process have been implemented piecemeal without overhauling the entire system of education as recommended by the EPRC report. More importantly, there have been widespread policy inconsistencies with regard to the philosophy of education, emphasis on higher education vis a vis primary and tertiary education and a whole range of grey areas, rendering education policy largely ineffective.

Consequently, it is important to observe and point out that the unsatisfactory state of Uganda's education system today is not for lack of trying at reform but the failure to articulate a coherent education policy and pursue its implementation persistently and relentlessly. The policy options presented in this briefing paper are intended to trigger a national debate on the strategic policy reforms required to advance Uganda's education policy and make Uganda competitive regionally and globally. Because it is often tempting to focus on the nuts and bolts of reform in any education policy debates, we have opted to raise what we believe are strategic policy issues that need to be resolved in order to address the conditions for effective policy engagement and implementation. Most importantly, we have raised the issue of policy and political leadership for managing and implementing reforms in the education sector. We believe that previous reforms have not delivered the desired outcomes because of absence or failure of such leadership. Yet, confronting these challenges in a forward looking and relentless manner could determine the future position of Uganda in an integrated East African Community and the continuously evolving global economic architecture.



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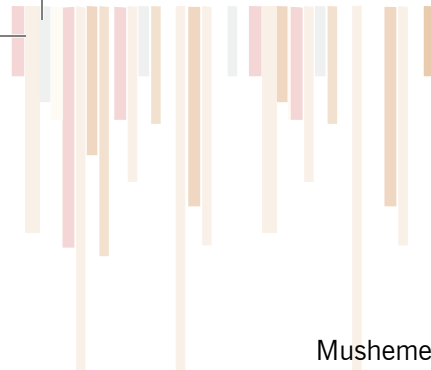
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